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UNCLAS QUITO 002533

SIPDIS

USTR FOR BUD CLATANOFF, USDOL FOR JORGE PEREZ-LOPEZ, DRL/IL
FOR GREG MAGGIO, EB FOR AMY HOLMAN
SECSTATE FOR US TRADE REPRESENTATIVE

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [ELAB](#) [PGOV](#) [EC](#)

SUBJECT: MINISTER OF LABOR SHARES CONCERNS ON CHILD LABOR

REF: A. QUITO 2480

[1](#)B. QUITO 2448

[1](#)1. (U) Summary. At a breakfast meeting at the Ambassador's residence on September 15, the Ambassador emphasized to MOL Raul Izurieta the importance of combating child labor and inquired into current MOL efforts to do so. Izurieta described efforts the Ministry is already taking towards eliminating the worst forms of child labor, and looked forward to the implementation of the USDOL-funded education project. End Summary.

[1](#)2. (U) Izurieta said the MOL will conduct a study, with the help of INEC (the National Institute of Statistics and Census) to determine the actual number of child workers in Ecuador. Previous studies by UNICEF estimated about 700,000 child workers while First Lady Ximena Bohorquez, as head of INNFA (the Institute for the Child and Family) put the number around 1.2 million. Izurieta believes the number is much lower-no more than 300,000.

[1](#)3. (U) Izurieta expressed appreciation for the Department of Labor's planned \$3 million education program to combat child labor. Izurieta did not want the money spent on more studies, however, and would like "99.9%" of funds to go directly to project implementation. Izurieta also spoke of the need for a publicity campaign to raise rural parents' awareness of the importance of education for their children. Many of these parents pull children out of school to work on the family farm. Izurieta said an awareness campaign was needed in the business sector as well.

[1](#)4. (U) Izurieta also spoke enthusiastically of the work of the Banana Social Forum which brings together the government, banana industry and unions to combat child labor. (The Banana Social Forum has conducted six inspection methodology workshops for inspectors and monitors in Guayas, Los Rios and El Oro Provinces. They have also had six child labor awareness workshops for banana employers and workers.) Izurieta would like to emulate the model in a soon-to-be-created Flower Social Forum targeting Ecuador's expanding cut-flower industry.

[1](#)5. (U) Izurieta said one child labor inspector resigned last week but that he would hire four more inspectors this week. Izurieta stated he believes his child labor inspectors have done a good job of identifying which of the larger companies are violating child labor laws.

[1](#)6. (U) Comment. We believe Izurieta is willing to "do the right thing" on child labor but needs our encouragement to push things forward. Izurieta was eager to maintain a high level of communication and work with us on child labor issues.
KENNEY